

## The Persuasive Power of Stylistic Devices in the Speech of Mediators

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**Abstract.** The focus of this article is to explore the functioning of the stylistic devices used by the mediator in the communicative situation of reconciliation. It has been determined that in the process of implementing the persuasive strategy the mediator mostly uses such stylistic devices as metaphor, simile, quotation and repetition. They render the mediator's speech more picturesque, expressive and emotionally coloured. They also help to persuade the participants in conflict situations to interact harmoniously.

**Keywords:** mediator, stylistic devices, persuasion, communicative situation of reconciliation.

Mediation as a practice of conflict management is the subject of research in the field of jurisprudence (R. D. Rieke, M. O. Sillars, T. R. Peterson, S. I. Kalashnikova, L. M. Karnozova, Ye. R. Bersheda, O. Ye. Soloviova, V. V. Rieznikova, S. V. Yerohin and others), conflict resolution studies (Ch. Bessemer, R. Fisher, W. Ury, Ch. Pelikan, A. Ya. Antsupov, A. I. Shypilov, M. I. Piren, M. I. Panov and others), philosophy (E. Watzke) and psychology (E. Atwater). The research works which study the linguistic aspect of mediation are not numerous (N. S. Barebina, A. G. Chernyshenko).

The persuasive power of stylistic devices is a common fact. They render the verbal means of communication more picturesque, vivid and emotionally coloured. The aim of the article is to determine and describe the most common stylistic devices the mediators use in their speech to persuade the participants in conflict situation to interact harmoniously. To do so the verbal behaviour of mediators in the communicative situation of reconciliation has been investigated.

The methodology of this research has been based on discourse analysis, contextual analysis and the descriptive method.

For the sake of consistency the following terms referring to the participants in the communicative situation of reconciliation are used: the term *offender* is used to refer to the speaker who has caused the conflict situation; the term *victim* refers to the speaker who has suffered from the conflict situation; and the term *mediator* is used to refer to the speaker who facilitates communication between the victim and the offender and helps them reconcile with each other.

**Metaphors.** Our research has shown that a metaphor is one of the dominant stylistic devices the mediators use in the process of implementing the persuasive strategy. The widespread belief in the influential power of metaphors is reflected in G. G. Pocheptsov's assertion that this stylistic device is a significant means of exercising influence, which can change the consciousness [5, p. 223].

It has been determined that in the communicative situation of reconciliation the mediators mostly use: 1) nominative metaphors to convey the negative feelings of the speaker who has suffered from the conflict situation; 2) metaphors of action which embody liberation from these feelings.

Among the *nominative metaphors* used by the mediators in the communicative situation of reconciliation the metaphorical expressions containing such constituents as "burden", "load" and "chain" are frequent. They are used to represent the negative feelings of the victim towards their offender in the form of the load or the chains. They restrain the victim, holding him/her hostage to their own negative feelings and emotions. These feelings make it impossible to forget about the conflict and the damage it has caused.

"But you will have to learn to forgive – all of them – even Kenny. If you cannot find it in your heart to forgive, then you will live with the burden of hate all your life. And it will reflect on those around you. Remember, Kenny was but a boy" [14, p. 189].

Trying to persuade the victim to forgive the other party of the conflict, the mediator compares the feeling of hatred with the

load, which will negatively affect not only the victim's life, but his family and friends' lives as well. By using this metaphor, the mediator expresses his own negative attitude to the victim's unwillingness to forgive his offender. The metaphor *the burden of hate* also makes the victim reflect on the need for a constructive conflict resolution, since it's the only decision that may help to get rid of the destructive feelings and emotions caused by the conflict.

The findings show that the *metaphors of action* are represented by the word combinations with imperative verbs. With the help of these metaphors the mediator urges the victim to set free from the negative feelings caused by the conflict situation.

*Jay was sulking around the office, and I stopped and said, "Jay, when are you going to forgive your mother?" He said, "Dad, I think about it all the time." I said, "I know you do. You are carrying a ball and chain on your ankle, and you have the key to it in your back pocket. Reach down and unlock that ball and chain; forgive your mother"* [15, p. 84].

The fragment above depicts Jay's resentment and unwillingness to forgive in the form of a load chained to his leg. On the contrary, forgiveness is represented by the mediator as the key which may help to unchain the load.

To persuade Jay to forgive his mother, the mediator uses contextual synonyms in his speech. The metaphor *unlock that ball and chain* is an implicit indication of the necessity of constructive conflict resolution. The mediator's explicit urge to reconcile with the offender is represented by the imperative sentence *forgive your mother*. The usage of contextual synonyms serves to intensify the impact on the recipient and persuades him to accept the mediator's point of view.

In order to restore the peace of mind and get rid of the unpleasant feelings caused by the conflict situation, the victim needs to perform certain actions, demonstrated by the metaphors:

"Jay, you are damming the flow of God's blessings to you and your own life by unforgiveness. Forgive, and remove that dam; allow god's flow to come into your life unobstructed." He looked at me with piercing eyes and said, "Dad, I am going to do that right now" [15, p. 84-85].

The results of the investigation show that the *extended metaphor* is a powerful persuasive tool. Such metaphors serve to reveal the essence of the phenomenon they embody, add vividness and expressiveness to the speech of mediators and make their arguments seem more compelling.

"You think that I should forgive my father?" I asked incredulously.

"You must forgive him if you are ever to be free of him. We are chained to that which we do not forgive." [...] Imagine a ship trying to set sail while towing an anchor. Cutting free is not a gift to the anchor. You must release that burden, not because the anchor is worthy, but because the ship is" [10, p. 207].

The use of such images as *ship, anchor, chains and burden* are intended to describe the gloomy prospects of victim's life, marred by the resentment which is identified with the restriction of freedom and inability to live a happy life. Therefore, this

extended metaphor creates a sharply negative image in the victim's mind. It helps him to understand that getting rid of the heavy, oppressive feelings is important and necessary not for the offender only but for the victim too (*You must release that burden, not because the anchor is worthy, but because the ship is*).

In addition to the metaphors conveying the victim's feelings of offence and resentment, the mediators also use the metaphors that embody:

- psychological dependence on the offender:

*"Maria is right, you need to forgive him, for your own sake. Otherwise you allow him to continue walking around with pieces of your heart in his back pocket"* [18, p. 82];

- the ability to restore harmonious relations with the other party of the conflict situation:

*"I'm not ready to forgive her."*

*"I know, but someday you will," Carey said. It's a lot easier to fix a bridge if you don't burn it first"* [12, p. 154];

- the correct model of the victim's behavior as the mediator sees it:

*"Nancy Ann, he loves you, he needs you. Do this one big thing, give him another chance. [...] Swallow your pride, my dear, we all have to"* [8, p. 329-330].

**Similes** are also among the stylistic devices that have considerable persuasive power. They show the mediator's attitude to certain character traits of the participants in the conflict situation, their actions, behaviour, psychological and emotional state.

The results of the study assume that the vast majority of the similes used by the mediators to persuade the parties of the conflict to interact harmoniously are the similes formed by using zoomorphisms – "personality characteristics, formed on the basis of animal names" [1, p. 150].

The background to the communicative situation represented in the fragment given below is as follows: the girl has accused the young man she dates with of flirting with another girl. The young man tries to deny the accusation. It results in conflict escalation. Having witnessed this quarrel the boy's aunt acts as a spontaneous mediator.

*"Some men are womanizers, my dear. My nephew is one. As much as I love him, I know his faults. He likes women, he likes strong drink and he likes to gamble more than is good for him."*

*Manuel started to protest, but she shook her cane at him again. "Be still, you! Let me finish. Despite all that, he's got a heart of gold, he's strong as an ox, brave as a lion and loyal as a well as a dog? No, no that's not the right thing. Well, in any case, he's loyal. Honest I'll not always say of him, but he loves you, of that I'm certain. I'm also certain that if you wed, he won't do anything undeserving of your trust"* [16, p. 70].

The mediator demonstrates the good qualities of the offender by using zoomorphic similes which raise an extremely positive connotation: *strong as an ox, brave as a lion, loyal as a dog*. They attach more vividness and expressiveness to the statement, enhance its emotional content, and display the mediator's attitude toward the interlocutor whose behaviour has caused the conflict. All of the similes used by the mediator represent the positive character traits in hyperbolized form. It contributes to their credibility and draws attention to the most important segment of the utterance.

**Quotation** as one of the figures of identity [4] is "a verbalized confirmation of expressed thoughts" [2, p. 43] and is used by the mediators to increase the value of their arguments. Quotes function as arguments in support of the speaker's position [2, p. 42].

Our research has shown that in the communicative situation of reconciliation quoting the Bible has a powerful persuasive effect. By using this stylistic device the mediator appeals to universal values. Since the Bible is perceived by all the Christian believers as the source of undeniable truth and justice, the mediator confirms the appropriateness of his request and insists on the necessity of reconciliation between the victim and the

offender.

*"[...] Oh! I can never forgive her!"*

*"O Ellie, dear Ellie, don't say that!" said Mary, putting her arms round her. "Have you forgotten that Jesus said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses?" [...] and remember the Bible says, "Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer," and in another place, "If he love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" O Ellie, it frightens me to hear you talk so. Just think how wicked it is to say you hate anybody and will never forgive them. What if God should say he would never forgive you?"*

*"I am sorry I said such a wicked thing, but I was angry and didn't think how very bad it was"* [11, p. 348].

In this communicative situation the mediator persuades Ellie who is the victim to reconcile with her offender by integrating several quotes from the Bible into his speech (*Have you forgotten that Jesus said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses?" [...] and remember the Bible says, "Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer," and in another place, "If he love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"*). By using these overt quotes the mediator emphasizes that Ellie's refusal to forgive her offender is treated negatively from the point of view of spiritual and ethical values. It makes Ellie think about her own imperfection and sinfulness. As a result, she feels ashamed and guilty of her unwillingness to come to terms with her offender. Thus, by using the Bible quotes the mediator persuades the victim that the restoration of cooperation with her offender is reasonable and necessary.

It should be noted that quoting the Bible for the purpose of encouraging the reconciliation between the victim and the offender is effective only if the mediator and the person it is addressed to share the same moral, ethical and spiritual values. In the opposite case, the use of such a stylistic device is inefficient. As rightly stated by D. Myers, when the message we hear relates to our own views, it convinces us. If the message is contrary to what we think is right, we stand by our own opinion [3, p. 338].

*"[...] Excuse me for not forgiving the man, but I can't."*

*"You have to, Ryan. The Bible says..."*

*"I know what the Bible says, but I can't forgive him. I've never hated a human being so much in my whole life!"* [9, p. 242].

The mediator's attempt to persuade the victim to harmonize communication with his offender by using some Bible quote is ignored. The mediator is interrupted by his interlocutor who claims that forgiving is impossible (*I know what the Bible says, but I can't forgive him. I've never hated a human being so much in my whole life!*)

**Repetition** is a multifunctional stylistic device. It helps to emphasize the emotional aspect of communication, increases the efficacy of the speaker's intentions, performs the appellative function and holds the listener's attention [6, p. 208].

The study of the communicative situation of reconciliation shows that in the mediator's verbal behavior this stylistic device is mainly represented by the following two-component repetitions: consecutive contact repetitions, adjacent repetitions and distant repetitions in the form of the construction "the imperative form of the verb *to forgive* + noun denoting the offender / the Objective case of the personal pronoun he/she".

The example below demonstrates the use of the consecutive contact repetition.

*"Forgive him, forgive him, forgive him," the children around her began to chant. [...] The boy was neither caned nor expelled. Instead, he was forgiven and loved – not by just the students, but by the principal and teachers as well* [13, p. 134].

The phrase *forgive him* is repeated three times within one sentence. As evidenced by the example, the persuasive power of this repetition is sufficient to achieve the objective pursued by the mediator – the pupil is forgiven by the headmaster.

The next fragment demonstrates the usage of the adjacent repetition. The same phrase *forgive him* is now a part of two different sentences.

*But Prahba was speaking to her: "[...] But please forgive him. Forgive him, for God's sake[...]. He did wrong. He is senseless. I shall talk to him about it! [...]"* [7, p. 98].

In the example given below the analyzed stylistic device is represented in the mediator's speech by the distant repetition. The identical syntactic constructions *Forgive him* are separated from each other by one and two sentences.

*"What do I do about Bill?"*

*He pressed his hands against hers. "Forgive him. He did what Matthew wanted him to. Forgive him. Your family is his family. Always has been and always will be. Forgive him" [...]*

[17, p. 208].

As the results of our study show, the main functions of the repetitions in the speech of mediators are emphasizing the significance of a repeated segment of the utterance, making the mediator's idea clearer, and highlighting the emotional aspect of the statement.

Thus, the effectiveness of the mediators' activity largely depends on the stylistic devices they use. As the research has shown, metaphors, similes, quotations and repetitions are powerful persuasion tools in the communicative situation of reconciliation. They render the mediator's speech more picturesque, expressive and emotionally coloured, enhance the mediation process and persuade the parties of the conflict to interact harmoniously.

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## Персуазивный потенциал стилистических средств в речи медиатора

**Н. А. Передон**

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена исследованию функционирования стилистических средств, используемых медиатором в коммуникативной ситуации «примирение». Установлено, что доминантными стилистическими средствами реализации медиатором персуазивной стратегии общения являются метафоры, сравнения, цитация и повторы. Их употребление делает речь медиатора более образной, экспрессивной и эмоционально окрашенной, помогает убедить участников конфликтной ситуации в необходимости гармонизации межличностной интеракции.

**Ключевые слова:** медиатор, стилистические средства, персуазивность, коммуникативная ситуация «примирение».